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(Il)Liberal peace? P5 approaches to conflict management and resolution

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Abstract

The framework of liberal peace – once the hallmark of a Western-led international order – is now in deep crisis. Its decline coincides with the rise of non-Western actors proposing alternative models of conflict management and resolution. This article challenges the assumption that Western states always pursue conflict resolution objectives, while non-Western states focus on conflict management tasks through illiberal approaches. Drawing on role theory, we reinterpret how states conceptualise and perform their responsibilities in the conflict management and resolution arena. We treat the Western/non-Western and liberal/illiberal divides as role conceptions, while the rhetoric preferences towards conflict management/conflict resolution are understood as role enactments. Using Latent Semantic Scaling, we analyse over 14,000 United Nations Security Council speeches (1992–2023). While the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia conform to their expected roles, China and France deviate from them. Our results suggest that conflict management and resolution strategies align more closely with conflict-specific and temporal factors than a rigid P3–P2 divide.

Keywords

conflict management, conflict resolution, liberal peace, P5, United Nations Security Council

Introduction

Recent scholarship on conflict management and resolution (CMR) has acknowledged the crisis of the liberal peace paradigm (Chandler, 2017; Mac Ginty, 2024). Indicators include the decline in negotiated peace agreements (Howard and Stark, 2018; Svensson and Söderbergh-Kovacs, 2013), the diminishing commitment to democratic peacebuilding and governance assistance (Veron and Sherrif, 2022) or the lack of new multidimensional peacekeeping missions deployed after 2014 (Duursma et al., 2023; Kenkel and Foley, 2021). In parallel, we also witnessed the increased engagement of non-Western actors like Russia, China, Turkey, or the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the field of CMR (Brosig, 2019; Call and De Coning, 2017; De Coning, 2021; Hellmüller and Salaymeh, 2025).

These intertwined dynamics – the decline of the liberal peace and the ascent of non-Western actors in CMR – have contributed to the development of a binary analytical typology employed to describe, explain and interpret the status of CMR. Scholars frequently depict the West as anchored to – though increasingly retreating from – expansive liberal forms of peacebuilding,

while non-Western actors are expected to advance illiberal and authoritarian objectives (Lewis et al., 2018). This opposition is particularly evident in analyses of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), where geopolitical, normative and identity-based contestation has resulted in institutional paralysis in the face of some major crises (Hellmüller, 2022). While the literature recognises the oversimplification inherent in the binary thinking, it has nonetheless relied on this framework to account for a broader shift from conflict resolution (CR) – long-term efforts aimed to address the so-called root causes of conflict through institutionalising governance and the promotion of comprehensive peace – to conflict management (CM) – short-term strategies focused on containing or ending immediate violence, prioritising stability over structural changes – and explain the tensions that this shift has generated in the field of CMR. Through this approach, the literature has treated the West/liberal versus non-West/illiberal typology as an explanatory variable to predict individual states' preferences towards either CM or CR.

Despite the extensive literature, it remains unclear whether these presumed binary associations between actor types (Western/liberal vs non-Western/illiberal) and preferred approaches to CMR (CM vs CR) consistently hold as well as under what conditions states deviate from these expected ideological alignments. Emerging scholarship suggests that mismatches do exist – for instance, in the positions of individual states (Levorato and Donelli, 2024) or specific United Nations (UN) missions (Rosas Duarte and Souza, 2024) – but lacks a systematic framework connected to their cause. This article addresses this gap. Rather than discarding the typologies altogether, we treat them heuristically to unpack possible internal consistencies with role theory. Role theory posits that states behave according to socially constructed roles shaped by both internal identities and external expectations (Thies and Breuning, 2012; Thies and Wehner, 2019). We conceptualise these theoretically derived Western/non-Western and liberal/illiberal distinctions as role conceptions – states' self-understanding and the expectations others place upon them – while their preferences towards CM or CR as policy choices are treated as role enactments. In this analysis, we focus on the five permanent (P5) members of the UNSC: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Their privileged institutional status and global reach make them ideal cases for examining how role conceptions translate – or fail to translate – into consistent CMR policy preferences in multilateral fora.

Our core argument is that role conceptions and enactments do not always align. Following the hypothesis-generating design of this article, we identify two sets of possible explanatory factors for these divergences. A first consideration is linked to the presence of endogenous constraints

arising from the evolving normative structures and practices of CMR. They reflect how norms, institutional routines and generational expectations within the CMR arena can channel the ways states perform their roles. The second set of factors refers to exogenous constraints related to the nature of specific conflicts. While states may voice preferences for CM in one crisis, it does not preclude them from pursuing CR strategies in other contexts. Rather than treating individual states' policy preferences as inherent or stable, the two conditions showcase how the P5 adjust their CMR stances without necessarily altering underlying role conception.

Methodologically, we analyse more than 14,000 UNSC speeches delivered by the P5 between 1992 and 2023 with Latent Semantic Scaling (LSS). This text-as-data approach allows us to position each speech along a continuum from CM to CR based on seed words derived from the literature on intervention mandates (Hellmüller et al., 2024). By applying role theory to account for misalignment in state behaviours and systematically analysing spatiotemporal dynamics, we derive three main findings. First, while the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia display a degree of continuity between their expected role conceptions and enactment in absolute terms, the study identifies mismatches for the Chinese and French positions. Second, the longitudinal analysis allows us to break down (non-)alignments between the P5's roles and their enactment, showing how the general evolutionary trajectory of CMR interacts with the P5's individual preferences. Notably, the data reveal that a unanimous consensus on CM during the 1990s was followed by the broad shift towards CR across all P5 states in the 2010s. However, after 2011, a dual trend emerges: while the P3 (France, the United Kingdom and the United States) display a unified tendency towards strengthening their CR preferences, the P2's (China and Russia) preferences have remained unvaried or even shifted back to CM. Third, we visualise that the P5's expressed policy preferences regarding CMR are contingent on specific crises. When analysing individual conflict cases, our data show limited evidence for a consistent ideological gap between the P3 and the P2. This result resonates with Medzihorsky et al. (2017), who observed variations in the rhetorical positions among the P5 rather than a rigid bloc divide in their case study on the Syrian war. However, our findings also point to increased convergence within each group (among the P3 and between the P2) in UNSC debates after 2011. It hence supports conclusions of increased polarisation in current Council practice (Allen and Yuen, 2022).

Overall, the article contributes to the ongoing debates on the trajectory of CMR in response to systemic changes. Our study suggests that policy preferences (enactment) within P5 are highly variable over time, while there is more homogeneity across contexts than commonly assumed.

Compared to previous studies, which have found degree of continuity between role conceptions and enactment for the P5 in thematic Council debates (Badache et al., 2022), our study shows significant elements of misalignment particularly for the cases of China and France during the 2002–2011 period. We also conclude that Russia is the only P5 member that maintains a strong coherence towards CM. On the contrary, all other states vary in time: while the United States and the United Kingdom move towards CR, China retreated from CR in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. These findings further underscore how state positions alongside a CMR continuum are conditioned by general trends connected to the evolution of the conflict intervention field (endogenous), but also shift based on the regional and local contexts of intervention missions. Overall, we find little support for the constant and universally applicable P3 versus P2 dichotomy that was long emphasised in the field of CMR.

The article proceeds as follows. The subsequent section draws on role theory to discuss the three dichotomous typologies employed for the analysis – namely, CM/CR, Western/non-Western, liberal/illiberal. Section 'Data and methods' introduces data and methods, while section 'Results' presents the results. The conclusion sums up the main findings and suggests avenues for further research.

The West versus the rest in CMR?

The peace and conflict studies literature has long acknowledged that the presumed existence of a relatively cohesive international community with uniform preferences towards managing and resolving conflicts (Doyle and Sambanis, 2006; Fortna, 2008) is, in fact, underpinned by the understanding of an international community confined to 'the conglomerate of industrialized democracies' (Ottaway, 2002: 1001). The Western/liberal lead in CMR is evident both in how threats to peace are framed (Grimm et al., 2014) and in the peace models that are proposed as potential solutions (Barnett et al., 2007; Richmond, 2004).

While the West's leadership position in multilateral CMR was previously contrasted with the developing world, it has recently become entangled in a binary relationship with the non-West (Cunliffe, 2019; Turner and Kühn, 2019). The emergence of the non-West as a category of actors can be traced to the hesitant acceptance and the subsequent opposition to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) by the BRICS (Foot, 2020; Stuenkel, 2014). In the 2010s, a critical development at the UN was the emergence of a fissure 'between a Western-led interventionist group and a "sovereignty bloc" led by Moscow and Beijing, but with real appeal to key emerging powers like Brazil, South Africa and India' (Bosco, 2024; see also Chen and

Yin, 2020; Fung, 2019, 2023). While the non-Western category in CMR has initially encompassed a range of emerging and regional powers, it has increasingly centred on China and Russia as established powers (Kostelyanets, 2019; Lei, 2011; Lewis, 2022). This narrowing of the analytical focus reinforced the view of CMR tools as instruments of the foreign policy strategies employed by individual countries in conflicts (Levorato and Donelli, 2024; Meiske and Ruggeri, 2017).

The shift from a 'West versus developing states' framing to a broader 'West versus non-West' dichotomy has also been accompanied by a strengthening of the ideological dimension (Bettiza and Lewis, 2020; Bettiza et al., 2023). In particular, states' position in CMR have increasingly crystallised around liberal or illiberal orientations. While the liberal peace paradigm once clearly reflected the West's self-defined approach to international order, recent scholarship has highlighted the rise of illiberal alternatives that challenge both liberal norms and the centrality of their promoters (Lewis et al., 2018). The illiberal peace provides a framework for analysing cases – ranging from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire to Syria – where the conflict termination outcomes diverged from those ideated under a liberal paradigm and the involved actors undermined the previously hierarchical system of intervention whose normative foundations had justified the multilateral actions after the Cold War (Abboud, 2021; Lewis, 2020; Piccolino, 2015; Smith, 2014). In today's increasingly competitive international environment (Hellmüller and Salaymeh, 2025), states' positions in CMR have hardened around these opposing objectives of conflict intervention.

Role theory is well suited to the study of CMR, a field historically grounded on the assumptions about who intervenes and who stands on the receiving side of interventions (Finnemore, 2003). Roles are defined as 'social position' (Harnisch, 2011: 8) and 'patterns of expected, appropriate behavior' (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2011: 114) attributed to states.[1] Role theory describes two main dimensions that compose a role. On the one hand, the *role conception* refers to 'the image of appropriate orientations of functions of [a] state toward, or in, the external environment' (Holsti, 1970: 245–246). It encompasses both the actor's own self-image – the *ego* part of roles – and other actors' image of that appropriate behavior – expectations and recognition (Harnisch, 2011: 7). Role theory claims that the conceptions matter since they shape how states understand their place and responsibilities in international affairs. On the other hand, *role enactment* refers to states' foreign policy preferences in specific issue areas (Thies and Breuning, 2012; Walker, 1979; Wish, 1980). Role conception is often treated as the independent variable that explains enactment. In CMR, the existing dialectic between the

liberal/West and the illiberal/non-West has sparked academic interest in studying which policy preferences towards CMR individual states display. Scholars have frequently analysed how states' normative understandings as well as expectations translate in actual policy preferences (e.g. Jütersonke et al., 2021; Lewis, 2022).

It has produced a distinction between two ideal-typical intervention styles distinguished by the scope, timeframe and ambitions. On the one hand, CR aims to tackle the root causes of conflict through an institutionalisation of governance (Ramsbotham et al., 2005).[2] Taking a long-term perspective, CR addresses the underlying political dynamics of conflict and seeks comprehensive peace solutions. Instead, CM has the objective of ending immediate violence. It operates on the short-term dimension and addresses the manifest level of violence, often through military means. The distinction between governance-centred and stability-centred approaches is crucial for differentiating between CR and CM.

Within these ideal types, the preferences of individual states are situated. Among the P5, Russia is often associated with the coercive, regime-focused approach to CMR, prioritising order over justice (Lewis, 2022). China's opposition to the liberal peace aligns with its broader contestation of the liberal international order (LIO). Its model emphasises the need to preserve incumbent governments' sovereignty and recognise the legitimacy of non-liberal regime types. Moreover, under the rubric of 'developmental peace', China also emphasises the importance of economic development and political stability as core preconditions for sustainable peace (Escriche and Burguete, 2023; Foot, 2020; Fung, 2019; He, 2021; Zhou et al., 2024). Comparative studies have highlighted the P2's preferences towards a 'statist peacebuilding order' which prioritises 'the construction of a strong state with hierarchical/centralized governance' (Jütersonke et al., 2021: 948). Studies employing discourse analysis have highlighted their reliance on CM terminology (Badache et al., 2022). In contrast, the three Western states (P3) and especially the Anglophone members of the group are often associated with a pluralist peacebuilding order which favours a 'horizontal and decentralized governance [structure] with diffused authority and participatory mechanisms' (Jütersonke et al., 2021: 947) that is commonly associated with CR approaches. At the same time, scholars have also noted a pragmatic turn towards stabilisation that highlights a retreat from CR to CM also by the Western powers (Belloni and Costantini, 2019; Belloni and Moro, 2019; Zyck and Muggah, 2015). Generally, however, the literature still identifies a strong degree of alignment between the P5's role conception and enactment in CMR. The Western states, acting under the liberal

peace paradigm, are believed to have a consistent CR preference. The non-Western states are instead associated with a CM focus drawn from illiberal peace.

In contrast to this general assumption, this article seeks to explain instances of non-alignment between the P5's role conceptions and their enactment regarding CM or CR – our dependent variable. As a hypothesis-generating contribution, it proposes two sets of possible explanations. First, we hypothesise the existence of endogenous constraints related to the evolving normative structure and practice of CMR itself. Drawing on role theory, we treat states' preferences as developing complex two-way interactions with their institutional framework, the UN (Harnisch, 2011) and broader international transformations. As a result, the normative environment within which states operate is neither static nor malleable to their interests, but rather exerts an independent influence on their policy preferences. Indeed, recent literature in peace and conflict increasingly emphasises a need to historicise conflict interventions (Richmond, 2021), such as recognising that CMR is always a product of its time and shaped by world politics (Hellmüller and Badache, 2025; Richmond, 2025). At the same time, Buitelaar (2025) demonstrated that UN dynamics do not immediately adapt to macro-level changes. Based on these dynamics, we treat (non-)alignment as time-dependent, shaped by the global environment in which the P5 operate.

The second set of explanations concern exogenous constraints related to the nature of conflicts. While the first variable is more useful for identifying changes at the level of role conceptions through patterns of (non-)alignment, this second variable captures country-specific incentives or cost-benefit calculations that influence role enactment. Indeed, the literature has recognised that CMR presents a practice-oriented field, often shaped by the context in which interventions are deployed (Bellamy, 2011). From research on new wars (Kaldor, 1999) to the role of terrorism in conflict (Howard and Stark, 2018), there is a widespread understanding that CMR evolves also in response to shifting conflict dynamics. For instance, the bilateral relations between host countries and interveners matter (Medzihorsky et al., 2017). Recent UN publications such as the 'New Agenda for Peace' (2023) explicitly acknowledge the complexity of contemporary crises as a constraint on CMR policies. We thus treat (non-)alignment as context-dependent that will be examined it in relation to conflict cases. In the empirical section, we analyse variations in CMR attitudes alongside three dimensions: (1) across P5, (2) over time and (3) across conflicts. Following Gelman and Imbens (2013), we frame our results in terms of associations rather than strict causal claims, because our observational data are better suited to identifying patterns than making causal claims.

Nevertheless, this analytical approach still enables us to systematically trace the conditions under which role conception and enactment diverge, generating hypotheses for future research on the sources of (non-)alignment in P5 behaviours.

Data and methods

This article analyses the P5 based on their speeches at the UNSC's public sessions from 1992 to 2023. The UNSC presents a suitable case given its importance as the main body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security. Previous studies have frequently employed public speeches at the UN to extract information on states' foreign policy preferences (Baturo et al., 2017; Sakamoto, 2023; Turco, 2024), also in investigating the liberal/illiberal paradigm. For instance, Kentikelenis and Voeten (2021) found that regime type predicts the extent to which delegates contest the liberal world order at the UN. The public nature of UNSC sessions offers a platform to observe and analyse diplomatic interactions. While we recognise that discourses differ from practices (i.e. employed language does not equal a state's behaviour), how the P5 speak at the UNSC still sends consequential signals about their position on CMR (Scherzinger, 2023).

We extracted over 14,000 speeches by the P5 from the dataset by Schönfeld et al. (2025) that covers the 1992–2023 period. We excluded non-permanent members rotating at the UNSC to guarantee comparability of the analysis, as the elected members' speeches are less frequent and not equally distributed. The sample also excludes speeches in which the P5 acted on behalf of the rotating UNSC Presidency, as this contains organisational rather than substantial language. During the pre-processing, we cleaned the texts (e.g. eliminating stop-words, punctuation and symbols) and compounded multi-words of interest (e.g. 'human rights' was transformed into 'human_rights'). Finally, all words were stemmed and rare formulations (<10) eliminated for normalisation purposes. The details can be found in the supplementary material. The validity of these pre-processing choices has been supported using the *preText* package by Denny and Spirling (2018). We have also replicated the classification using unprocessed data and using alternative specifications (e.g. eliminating all geographical references).

In taking a text-as-data approach to CMR, this article builds on works by Badache et al. (2022) yet proposing three methodological novelties to advance research of states' policy preferences. First, the previous authors sampled only speeches that had the word 'peace' in the title of the meeting. Instead, we extended the analysis beyond thematic speeches on peace and included speeches on intervention cases. It examines whether preferences are distributed based on case-

specific dynamics and enables cross-sectional analyses of the P5. Second, we used data from the United Nations Peace Missions Mandate (UNPMM) dataset to systematically derive cues on typical forms of CM or CR (Hellmüller et al., 2024). UNPMM contains hand-coded data on mandates entrusted to peacekeeping operations, special political missions or good offices since 1948. The authors classify mandates into three classes: minimalist, moderate and maximalist. For our analysis, we borrowed the two extremities. Minimalist tasks have a focus on ending violence in the short-term, which we conceptualise as CM. Instead, maximalist tasks address the root causes of conflict and institutionalise governance mechanisms to avoid future conflicts. We hence understand them as CR. Our analysis presents, to our knowledge, the first application of text-as-data methodologies to UNPMM. The vocabulary gains analytical validity through its basis on an existing dataset.[3] As mandate language is standardised, it further ensures that we capture meaningful empirical differences alongside the CMR continuum. Expressions related to CM and CR as ideal types were identified in the pre-processed text of speeches at the UNSC. Similar to text-as-data studies (Levorato and Sguazzini, 2024), the concrete manifestations of each mandate in the Council debates were derived with a combination of theoretical knowledge and frequency-based analysis. The words were coded into two distinct dictionaries that served as the anchors for the following analysis. Tables 1 and 2 summarise the mandates with their empirical manifestations and frequencies in the sample. The validity of these seed words was tested following the suggestions proposed by Watanabe (2021), for instance, based on semantic coherence and distribution, in the online appendix.

Table 1. Maximalist dictionary.

Mandate	Formulations	Occurrences
Civil society capacity-building	'civil_societi', 'civil-societi', 'build capac', 'capacity-build', 'capac build', 'capac built'	2219
Dialogue and reconciliation	'dialogu', 'reconcili'	9156
Economic reforms	'econom reform', 'reform econom'	140
Good governance	'good_govern'	241
Human rights promotion	'human_right', 'human-right'	5005
Institution-building of transitional state authorities	'build institut', 'institut build', 'institut built', 'institution-build', 'transit author', 'transit govern', 'transit state', 'transit administr'	597
Promotion of independent media	'independ media'	22
Judicial reform	'judici reform', 'reform judici'	45
Rule of law and legal reform	'rule_law reform', 'reform rule_law', 'legisl reform', 'reform legisl', 'legal reform', 'reform legal'	42
Penal system reform	'penal system reform'	1

Mandate	Formulations	Occurrences
Sexual and gender-based violence	'gender-based_viol', 'sexual_viol'	1817
Security-sector reform	'secur sector reform', 'reform secur sector'	416
Support permanent state administration	'support state', 'support administer', 'support author', 'support govern'	408
Transitional justice	'transit justic'	182
Women's rights and participation	'women right', 'right women', 'particip women', 'women particip'	703

Table 2. Minimalist dictionary.

Mandate	Formulations	Occurrences
Coordination of donors, partners and UN agencies	'coordin donor' 'coordin partner' 'coordin united_n agenc'	42
Demining	'demin'	215
Demilitarisation	'demilitar'	169
Good offices and mediation	'good offic' 'mediat'	2382
Elimination of chemical weapons programme	'elimin chemical_weapon' 'chemical_weapon programm'	51
Refugee/IDP assistance	'refuge assist' 'assist refuge' 'intern displaced_person assist' 'assist intern displaced_person' 'idp assist' 'assist idp'	49
Humanitarian assistance	'humanitarian_assist'	1724
Observing, monitoring, reporting	'observ' 'monitor'	4425
Secure environment for delivery of aid	'secur environ' 'deliv aid' 'deliveri aid' 'aid deliv' 'aid deliveri'	389
Small Arms and Light Weapons	'salw' 'small_arm light_weapon'	659

Third, we moved beyond Badache et al.'s (2022) word frequency-approach and rely instead on LSS as a semi-supervised scaling technique (Watanabe, 2021). LSS uses a set of the so-called *seed words* to calculate the polarity of documents on a unidimensional scale that represents latent traits (e.g. sentiment or ideology). The seeds refer to a purposefully selected set of words that represent the extremities of a conceptual spectrum, which serve as the benchmark to guide the model in positioning the texts along this dimension. We have opted for scaling compared to other text-as-data methods, as it enabled us to operationalised CM and CR as ideal types positioned on the extreme ends of the conflict intervention scale with possible intermediate positions between them.

The analysis proceeded in a three-stage process. First, we used the words linked to the mandates included in Tables 1 and 2 as the seed words that refer to CM and CR. Second, the algorithm

calculates the proximity of all words to the seed words from the dictionaries. To do so, it relies on word embeddings. Compared to bag-of-words methods, word embeddings represent a form of natural language processing that captures semantic relations across words. Positioning them in a high-dimensional space, similar words are located closer to each other. In our analysis, this refers to synonyms (e.g. 'UNSC' and 'Council') or frequently co-occurring terms (e.g. 'DR Congo' and 'MONUSCO') compared distant forms (e.g. 'peace' and 'garden'). Once the semantic proximity of all words in the corpus to the seeds is calculated, they are assigned an individual score on the axis. Throughout the article, words with a negative score are associated with CM, while positive scores are linked to CR. The 20 most polarised words can be found in Figure 1, which functions as an internal validity check. Third, the scores for each word are aggregated to locate all documents on the scale. It operates by averaging the polarity scores of words with weights proportional to their frequency in the documents. We do not only count the individual mandate references but rather associate the language as a whole to belong either to CM or CR terminology based on the relative prominence of related words in the speech.

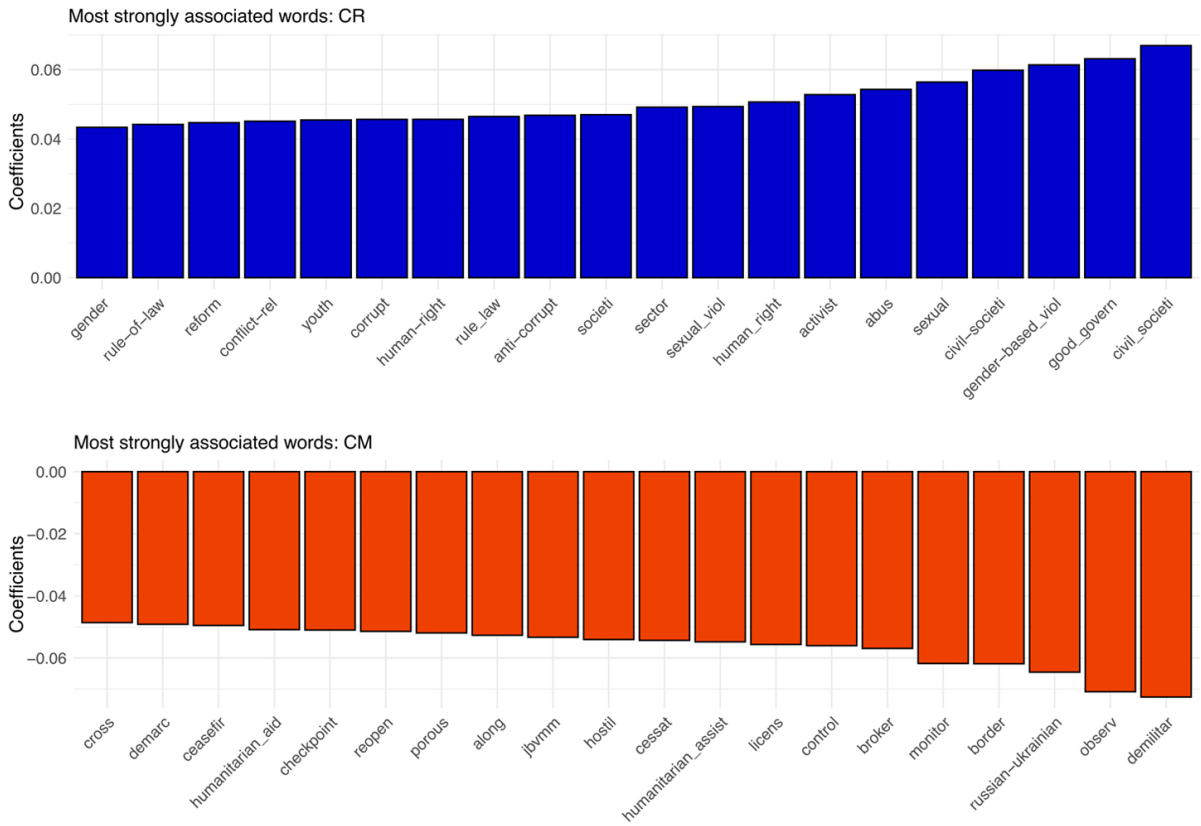

Figure 1. Twenty most strongly associated words to CM and CR.

To ensure the face validity of this classification, we manually codified 100 observations in the online appendix. Based on metadata in Schönfeld et al. (2025), we then tracked changes across speakers, over time and across intervention cases through a series of polynomial regressions.

For a substantive interpretation of the scale, the two sentences with the highest (CR) and lowest (CM) LSS score are presented in Table 3. Phrases directly connected to maximalist mandates in the UNPMM are underlined and minimalist mandates are printed in bold. It clearly emerges that speech 7704 by the United States has a CR focus by centering on sexual and gender-based violence, judicial accountability and the protection of minorities. Instead, speech 9509 by Russia focuses on the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) mandate classified as CM in the UNPMM. In sum, these two examples and the remaining hand-coded observations support the face validity of the LSS to distinguish empirically valid differences on the CMR scale.

Table 3. Sentences with the highest (top) and lowest (bottom) LSS score.

Observation	Sentence	LSS
USA in 7704	We have put in many place many tools for countering conflict-related sexual violence inflicted by State and non-State armed groups, improving accountability, bringing perpetrators to justice, documenting violations against marginalised groups of victims, including women and girls, men and boys, ethnic and religious minorities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals.	0.646
Russia in 9509	They include introducing a universal ban on the transfer of **all forms of small arms and light weapons to actors** not authorised by the Governments of the recipient States; ensuring the strict regulation and direct control by States on territory under their jurisdiction of brokerage activities related to arms exports and limiting the number of such brokers as much as possible; introducing a strict **prohibition on the re-export or subsequent transfer of imported small arms and light weapons without the** written consent of the State that first exported them, meaning that having end-user certificates would be mandatory for **arms export deals; and preventing the manufacture of small arms and light weapons on expired licences or** without a licence from a country possessing the technology for its manufacture, including stopping the practice whereby countries that previously produced weapons under licence modify them slightly without the developer's consent and export them later as their own product.	−1.448

Phrases directly connected to maximalist mandates in the UNPMM are underlined and minimalist mandates are printed in bold.

Results

P5 policy preferences towards CM and CR: Alignment or non-alignment?

Figure 2 illustrates the static policy preferences of the P5 towards CM or CR measured by the median polarisation by speaker. Among the P5, the United Kingdom (0.22) and the United States (0.27) demonstrate the strongest preference towards CR language. In the French case, however, this preference is oriented towards CM language (−0.06). Compared to the expectations derived from existing literature, the P3 do not display a unified preferences towards CR in this analysis. This result mirrors the notion of an 'Anglophone' instead of a Western cast that emerged with the expansion of CR under the liberal peace (Jütersonke et al.,

2021: 1). The distinction among the P3 also resonates with how Hubert Védrine, former French foreign minister, characterised France–US relations by arguing 'we are allies, friends, but not aligned' (Védrine, 1998).

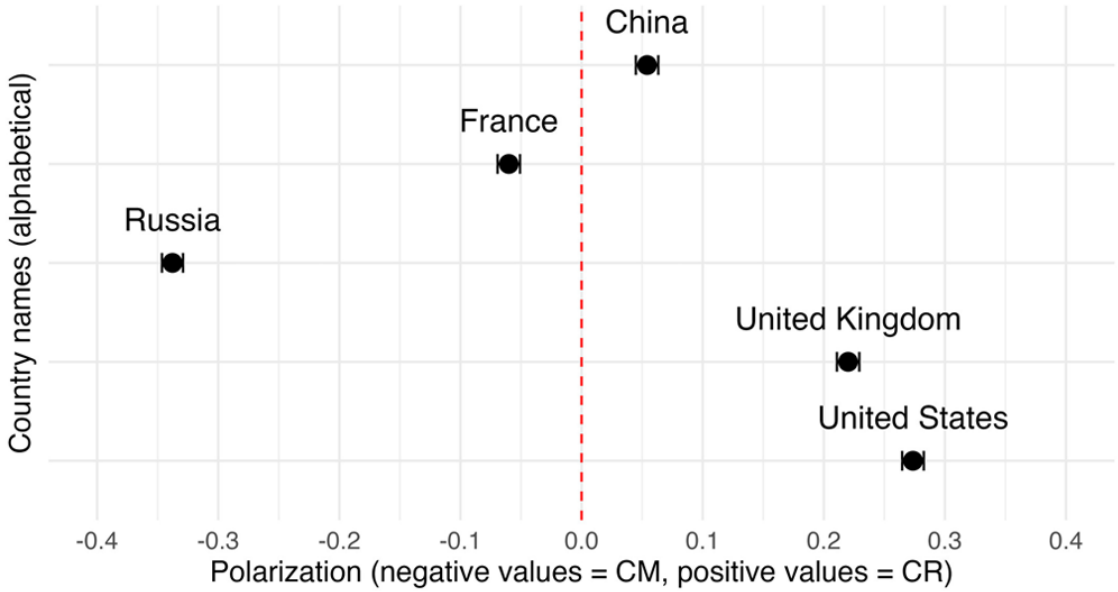

Figure 2. Median position by speaker (with 95% CI) for the 1992–2023 period.

This divergence, illustrated in Figure 4, may reflect several dynamics. Between 2002 and 2011, France's position was influenced by the vocal opposition to the US and UK invasion of Iraq. French officials at the time threatened to veto any resolution authorising the use of force *ex ante* and refused to legitimise the invasion ex post. In that context, the French leadership sought to prevent the UN from legitimising the US strategy of pre-emptive war and regime change, to preserve a vision of the international order based on international law and a degree of consensus on CM between great powers (Bozo, 2016; Guéhenno, 2015). France's position evolved after 2011 evolved. France was one of the main supporters of the intervention in Libya and of the application of the R2P doctrine. As underlined by Ostermann (2016), Sarkozy and his government used a liberal interventionist narrative, which in our data can be interpreted as a change of direction towards CR in the post 2012 period. This shift, however, was compensated by France's role in other regional theatres and in particular sub-Saharan Africa. As underlined by Wyss (2017) and Welz (2022), the French interventions in Mali were largely inspired by the goal of stabilising the region, preserving the local government's authority or preventing the emergence of safe havens for radical Islamist insurgencies. Moreover, as evidenced by Shurkin (2021), the French approach to counter-insurrection (COIN) abandoned ambitions to transform or even reform local institutions and societies while instead prioritising support to local regimes to maintain order and stability. These elements, further corroborated by the analyses by Pérouse

de Montclos (2020) and Guichaoua (2020), explain why the French approach remains closer to the CM spectrum compared with the Anglophone position. It validates our claim that variability between CR and CM is strongly dependent on the country context. These conclusions are hence coherent with the French position in Figure 2, where it is moderately placed in the CM camp.

While the P3's policy preferences do not converge towards CR, neither do the P2's preferences converge towards CM. Russia solidly leans towards CM (−0.34) in line with prior studies (e.g. Badache et al., 2022), yet China's median position at the UNSC resembles more the Anglophone cast rather than its non-Western counterpart (0.05). This trend contradicts observed patterns of voting similarity between China and Russia on matters related to missions. Since the 1990s, Russia and China have jointly cast vetoes on 16 of the 63 vetoed resolutions. Their coordination effects have particularly intensified after 2011. While the Chinese critical stance towards liberal interventions is strongly expressed in domestic policy documents (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2023, 2024), the language employed by its representatives at public Council sessions tends to be more conciliatory and focused on liberal language. Three conditions seem particularly relevant to make sense of this divergence.

First, a more assertive posture of Chinese diplomats at the UNSC has only emerged in recent years (Gowan, 2024). Previously, Chinese diplomats had maintained a rather passive approach to the Security Council, especially compared to their more active role in the General Assembly (Cai, 2024; Fung, 2019). During the period between 2002 and 2011, China has not opposed the rise of the R2P or the necessity of resorting to UN-authorised intervention in contexts of crisis. This stance was motivated both by the need to protect its expanding global economic interests and the objective of promoting China's own prestige as an emerging great power (Foot, 2020; Fung 2019, 2023). Only following the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervention in Libya in 2011 and the possibility of a new intervention legitimised by the R2P in Syria (2013–2014) has China distanced itself from earlier openings and come to view liberal interventionism as a strategy used by the West to subvert regimes that do not align with their normative preferences or political interests (Fung, 2019; Gowan, 2024).[4] Second, China has been successful in keeping conflicts of core interests, such as Myanmar, off the Security Council's agenda (Gowan, 2024). It has allowed the Chinese delegation to maintain a relatively low-profile stance compared to other P5 members that have been forced to engage on issues affecting their perceived spheres of influence, such as Ukraine or Georgia for Russia. Third,

while Chinese diplomats rely on liberal language, the underlying focus differs. For instance, in line with the objectives of CR, China maintains an emphasis on the necessity of addressing the root causes of conflict. Yet, the root causes of conflict differ from those identified by the West. Beijing perceives underdevelopment, weak sovereignty and a lack of infrastructure as key conditions (Adhikari, 2021; Garlick and Qin, 2024). China has consistently regarded efforts to promote democracy and human rights as sources of instability and conflict or even symptom of Western 'Cold War mentality' (Foot, 2024). A similar result was also presented by Frederking (2023), who found that diplomats frequently justify their no-votes using liberal language. While using hence a similar language to the Western actors, the inherent meaning and normative basis for the Chinese approach differs.

These results suggest that actor role conceptions do not necessarily translate into distinct role enactments and related policy preferences. While relative alignment exists for the United States, the United Kingdom (both West/liberal with a CR focus) or Russia (non-West/illiberal with a CM focus), the data present counterintuitive outcomes for France and China (Table 4). These results differ from Badache et al. (2022), who instead found evidence for a distinction along the P3–P2 lines. We attribute such a divergence to our sample. The previous studies analysed the P5's preferences in thematic sessions with the word 'peace' in the title, which are more likely to elicit normative or positional statements. In contrast, our analysis centres on conflict-specific debates where the states are confronted with concrete policy decisions (e.g. troop contributions and mandate design). The immediate material consequence of the decisions shapes their preferences in more pragmatic ways. However, as the two following sections of the article will discuss, the positions are not fixed. They instead exhibit notable variation over time and across different conflicts.

Table 4. Actor types and policy preferences in absolute terms.

	USA	**GBR**	**FRA**	**CHN**	**RUS**
Actor types	West Liberal	West Liberal	West Liberal	Non-West Non-Liberal	Non-West Non-Liberal
Policy preferences	CR	CR	CM	CR	CM
Alignment	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓

P5 policy preferences towards CM and CR across time

The longitudinal analysis further analyses whether and when the P5 shift their expressed policy preferences on the CMR scale. Figure 3 maps these positions by tracking their median polarity

score, exhibiting substantial individual and collective oscillations over time. During the 1990s, there was widespread convergence across all P5. The five states demonstrated a unified focus on CM with a gradual upward trend towards CR around the millennium. The associated polarity scores vary between −0.002 (the United Kingdom in 1998) and −1.55 (Russia in 1994). Following this period of consensus on CM among the P5, preferences diverged from the early 2000s. The United States and the United Kingdom continued to exhibit closely aligned preferences over time, in which they consistently relied on a CR language (positive peak of 0.86 for the United States in 2013). As sole exception, a downward peak towards CM is visible in the mid-2000s (e.g. −0.02 for the United States in 2006). We interpret this decline as the learning from the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, where expectations of the liberal peace did not materialise and hence led to more militarised solutions in response to local insurgencies. An evolution towards CR is also reflected in France's speeches (peak of 0.28 in 2015), though the scores remain more contained compared to the Anglophone P3. In contrast, Russia continued to maintain a consistent CM focus over the observation period. A short move towards CR during the mid-2000s (e.g. 0.06 in 2005) was succeeded by an immediate slide-back after 2007. Finally, China's trajectory (peak of 0.66 in 2005) more closely paralleled those of the P3 than Russia. Nevertheless, China experienced a gradual shift towards a more balanced position between CR and CM after 2014 (coefficients between 0.36 and −0.02).

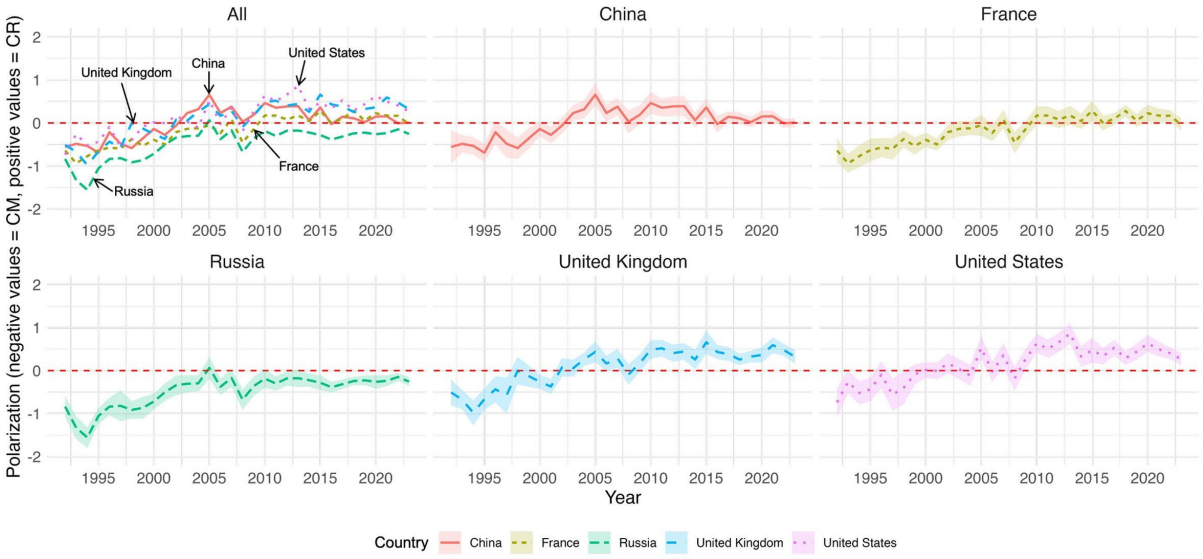

Figure 3. Median yearly position by speaker (with 95% CI).

Both individual and collective evolutions of P5 preferences are better understood if the analysis is broken down into shorter periods separated by key events derived from CMR literature: (1) 1992–2001, (2) 2002–2011 and (3) 2012–2023. In delineating these three periods, we relied on two critical junctions that triggered normative and practical changes in the attitudes of the P5

towards conflict intervention. The first threshold is 2001 with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the consequent emergence of the Freedom Agenda that led to the interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Global War on Terror. It marked the beginning of an era of liberal interventionism in its most expansive format. The second watershed is 2011, which coincides with the Arab Spring and the NATO-led intervention in Libya. The intervention in Libya, with the application of the R2P presented the culmination of the liberal era but provoked the beginning of a process of contestation of the liberal political, normative and strategic assumptions. Figure 4 illustrates the median position of each P5 member across these three periods.

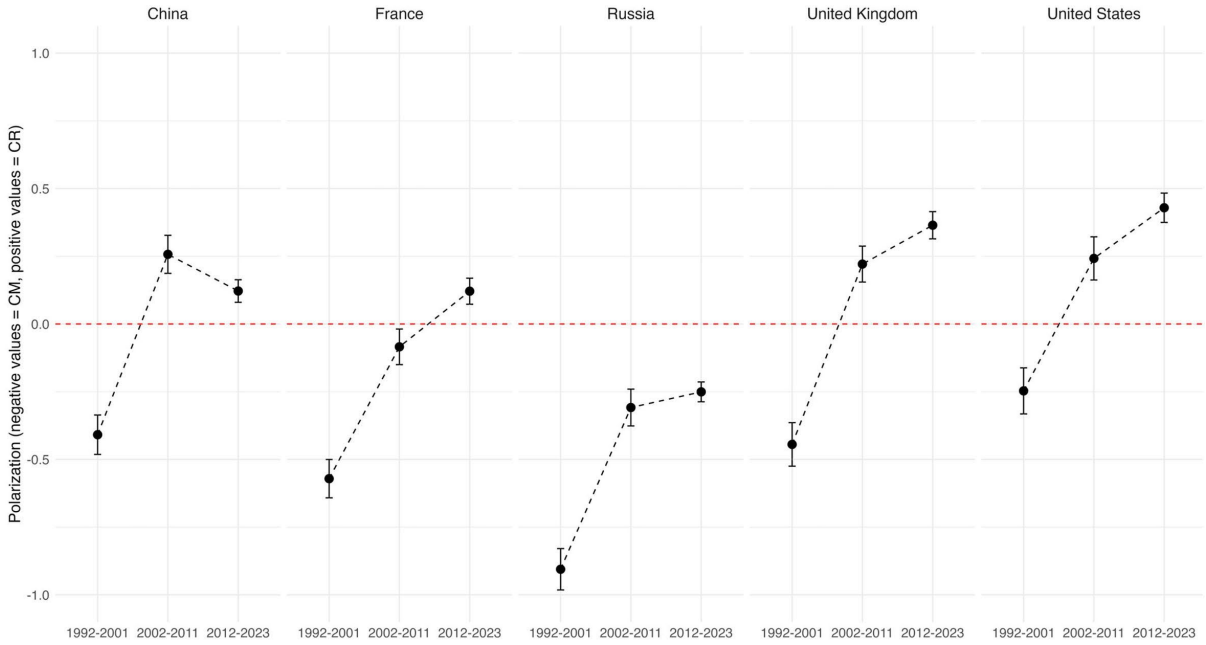

Figure 4. Median position for P5 members per period (with 95% CI).

While the P5's policy preferences displayed some variance in the 1992–2001 period (between −0.25 for the United States and −0.9 for Russia), they can all be consistently situated within the CM camp. The data refer to a moment in UN history when the trauma from failed interventions in Somalia, Rwanda or Bosnia-Herzegovina 'resulted in the UN's retreat from peacekeeping [since] many within the Secretariat believed peacekeeping should 'go back to the basics and deployments were limited to contexts where the traditional trinity could be upheld' (Rhoads, 2016: 63). This period also saw the publication of the 1992 'Agenda for Peace' setting the groundwork for CR by understanding peacebuilding as an instrument to address the root causes of conflict. During this period, all five positions substantially aligned (standard deviation (SD) = 0.22).

In the middle period (2002–2011), the seeded-LSS data indicate an evident shift of all P5 towards CR. This trajectory is particularly visible for China (0.26) and the United Kingdom

(0.22). While Russia (−0.31) and France (−0.08) do not express preferences that fully align with the CR paradigm, their positions are less polarised compared to the previous period and – for Russia – also compared to the following decade. The finding is in line with the existing literature, because this period marks a strong iteration of the liberal peace as a remedy to state failure paradigms influencing the international threat perception (Buitelaar, 2025; Rosas Duarte and Souza, 2024). It coincided with an effort to root international interventions in an expansionary liberal framework, which is exemplified, among others, by the affirmation of the R2P in the General Summit of 2005 and its subsequent application to Libya in 2011 (Bellamy and Williams, 2011).

Finally, in the period since 2012, the data identifies a twofold trend. On the one hand, the P3 all show a tendency towards deepening their CR preferences. While the United Kingdom (0.36) and the United States (0.43) adjusted their positions only slightly, France now finally expressed preferences aligned with the CR language (0.12). This last period also displays the greatest alignment between the P3 (SD = 0.16). On the other hand, the P2's collective preferences shifted towards CM. While Russia's position has become more moderate compared to the pre-2011 period (−0.25), China substantially adjusted its position towards CM after a decade in which it used a language coherent with the liberal vocabulary language (0.12). During 2012–2023, also the preferences of the P2 diverge less compared to previous periods (SD = 0.26). The increasing convergence among the P3 and between the P2 speaks to a polarisation that is currently visible in the Council and that made decision-making in recent crises more challenging (Allen and Yuen, 2022).

Based on the temporal dynamics (Figures 3 and 4), two ideal-typical trends exist for the individual P5 members. On the one hand, four of these permanent members have changed their dominant discourse from CM to CR over time. This shift occurred earlier for China, the United Kingdom and the United States (already in the 2001–2011 period) than for France (only after 2012). Although at different times and with varying degree, the P3 seems to have eventually converged on a common CR framing. On the other hand, Russia remains the outlier with an almost consistent focus on CM language over the 31-year interval. This result challenges notions of cohesion in the positions of the non-Western powers in the Council, which has emerged based on their coordinated voting. Instead, the P2 do not seem to follow the same temporal trajectory in their expressed policy preferences. It also presents a breach of the prevalent P3 versus P2 logic which dominates the current CMR literature. Similar to the claim

by Boutellis (2022: 17), our temporal analysis shows that 'P5 dynamics are not static (and are not always P3 versus P2)'.

P5 policy preferences towards CM and CR across interventions

Finally, we present the P5's policy preferences across specific cases of interventions. It is meant to examine whether their position alongside the CMR spectrum is responsive to crisis-specific logics, analysing whether the non-alignments between role conception and enactment that we observed in some cases vary based on situational considerations. We proceed by analysing the degree of polarisation and diverging P5 preferences across conflicts. The figures on individual country situations can be found in the online appendix. Table 5 displays the conflicts with the most and least polarised preferences across the P5. Given the focus on CMR, only cases with interventions are included in this overview. For each agenda item, the polarisation is calculated as the difference between the maximum and minimum values of the median score by country, agenda item and year. In polarised contexts, there is increased divergence between individual speakers and for the same speakers over time. Among the cases with least polarised positions, the analysis underscores the prevalence of environments where UN missions were deployed and concluded in the 1990s. It refers, for instance, to UNCRO (1995–1996) and UNPSG (1997–1998) in Croatia, UNAMIC (1991–1992) and UNTAC (1992–1993) in Cambodia or MINUGUA (1997) in Guatemala. Widely discussed in peacekeeping literature (O'Neill and Rees 2001), the peacekeeping missions of the 1990s respected the three principles of consent, impartiality and minimum use of force that rendered them largely uncontested among the P5. The result that the least polarised cases are positioned in the 1992–2001 period, characterised by the relative convergence of all P5 towards CM (Figure 4), is reinforced in individual country-cases.

Table 5. Most and least polarised cases.

High polarisation	Coefficients and 95% CI	Low polarisation	Coefficients and 95% CI
Sierra Leone	4.42 (4.12–4.72)	Guinea	0.49 (0.21–0.76)
Burundi	4.12 (3.91–4.33)	Guatemala	1.02 (0.55–1.50)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4.09 (3.95–4.23)	Croatia	1.48 (1.24–1.72)
Iraq	3.88 (3.72–4.04)	CAR/Chad	1.53 (1.10–1.95)
Liberia	3.72 (3.50–3.94)	Nepal	1.56 (1.15–1.97)
Israel/Syria	3.45 (2.87–4.03)	Guinea-Bissau	1.63 (1.46–1.80)
Yemen	3.32 (3.10–3.53)	Cambodia	1.64 (1.28–1.99)
Libya	3.30 (3.14–3.45)	Côte d'Ivoire	1.66 (1.46–1.87)

High polarisation	Coefficients and 95% CI	Low polarisation	Coefficients and 95% CI
Syria	3.27 (3.12–3.43)	Western Sahara	1.70 (1.59–1.80)
Haiti	3.24 (3.13–3.36)	Papua New Guinea	1.76 (1.54–1.97)

Among the cases with the most polarised preferences, the results highlight the significance of cases where peace operations were initiated or ongoing in the 21st century. It included ONUB (2004–2006) in Burundi, MINUSTAH (2004–2017) and MINUJUSTH (2017–2019) in Haiti, UNAMSIL (1999–2005) in Sierra Leone or UNMIL (2003–2018) in Liberia. All polarised cases in Table 4 have experienced at least one mission (peacekeeping or special political) that was classified as maximalist by the UNPMM. The sole exception are the recent conflicts in Yemen and Syria, where intervention was deadlocked due to P5 divergences (Frederking, 2023). There are also some well-known cases of peace enforcement missions such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Libya.

In these specific cases, the related polarisation can be traced to their coercive mandates. Overall, the adoption of mandates connected to CR seems to trigger higher degrees of positional variability in individual P5 positions over time and among the five delegations.

In a subsequent step, we have selected instances of civil conflict that involved the deployment of UN missions (peacekeeping or special political missions) in the 1992–2023 period to further investigate the polarisation dynamics.[5] Figure 5 categorises the P5's prevalent preferences as a collective towards CM and CR for 33 country situations over three periods (1992–2001, 2002–2011, 2012–2023) with a heatmap. A threefold temporal division allows for the analysis of 65 country-periods, considering that not all conflicts are discussed over the entire period. In the 1992–2011 period, 19 of 25 conflicts debated at the UNSC (76%) were framed as CM. The sole exceptions are Burundi (0.34), the Central African Republic (0.28), Guinea-Bissau (0.4), Haiti (0.14), Libya (0.06) and Somalia (0.11). In the 2002–2011 period, only 5 of 20 crises (25%) maintained a dominant CM framing. In some cases, the CM language continued to be upheld from the previous period. It is true for Cyprus (−0.74), Georgia (−1.7) and Sudan (−0.86). Only in two newly emerged conflicts, namely, Côte d'Ivoire (−0.47) and Nepal (−0.64), there was a fresh consolidation of conflict-centred narratives on CM. In the final period, all but four cases (80%) were addressed with the CR. The exceptions are Cyprus (−0 to 03), Sudan and South Sudan (0.05), Syria (−0.72) and Yemen (−1.23). This outcome reflects an overall shift in the UNSC's approach over time. Apart from some outliers like Afghanistan

and the Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo, there is a tendency of adopting CR as a follow-up step if violence decreases in specific conflicts. For example, at the height of the Timor Leste independence struggles during the 1992–2001 period, the Council maintained a CM focus (−0.18). Only in a subsequent phase (2002–2011), there was instead a strong shift towards CR (0.63) that reflects the willingness to engage in more long-term objectives once the immediate levels of violence decrease. A similar result is confirmed by Knapp (2024) for the protection of civilians' mandate in peace missions. Apart from a general preference towards CR language over the 31-year period, it hence shows that CM and CR follow a temporal stage model even within single conflicts.

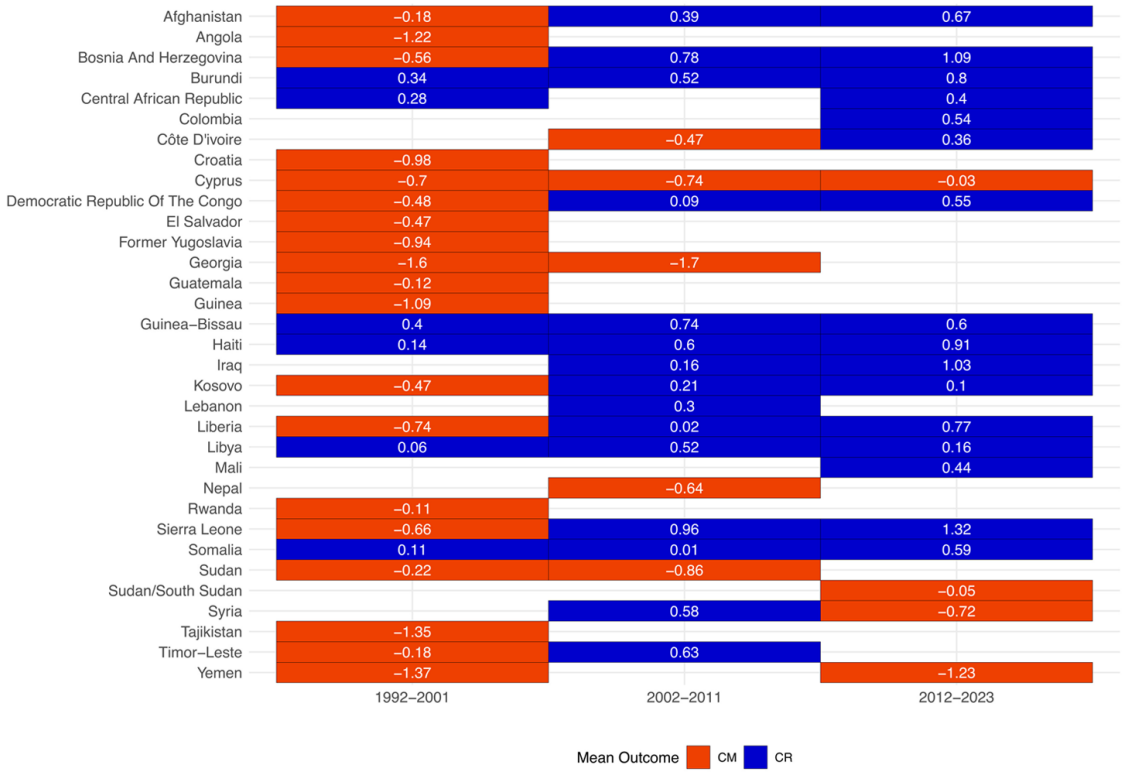

Figure 5. Heatmap of the conflict framing over time.

In the final step, the analysis is further broken down to examine each P5 member's preferences across the three periods and conflicts (Figure 6). It hence combines the three analytical lenses of this article (i.e. variation across P5, over time and across conflicts). The data reveal that the expressed preferences for CM and CR are highly context and time dependent. Three findings are worth noting. First, 49.23% (32 of 65) of the country-periods show a consistent framing by all five P5 members either as CM or CR. There are also some cases in which the P5 consistently apply the same approach across all periods, including Georgia (CM) or Yemen (CM). Instead, a consistent CR focus over three periods does not exist. But even in the cases of convergence, variance emerges when taking the positional intensity as an additional classification criterion.

The case of Syria after 2012 is a suitable example. While all five states frame the conflict as a case of CM, there is a large variance in the average position across P5. For example, the United Kingdom maintains a moderate approach (−0.42), while the CM focus is much stronger for Russia (−1.01). The nuanced framing breaks down the binary consideration of CM and CR, demonstrating that the difference is often a matter of intensity rather than direction. A similar conclusion has also been drawn by Hellmüller and Salaymeh (2025) regarding the political marketplace.

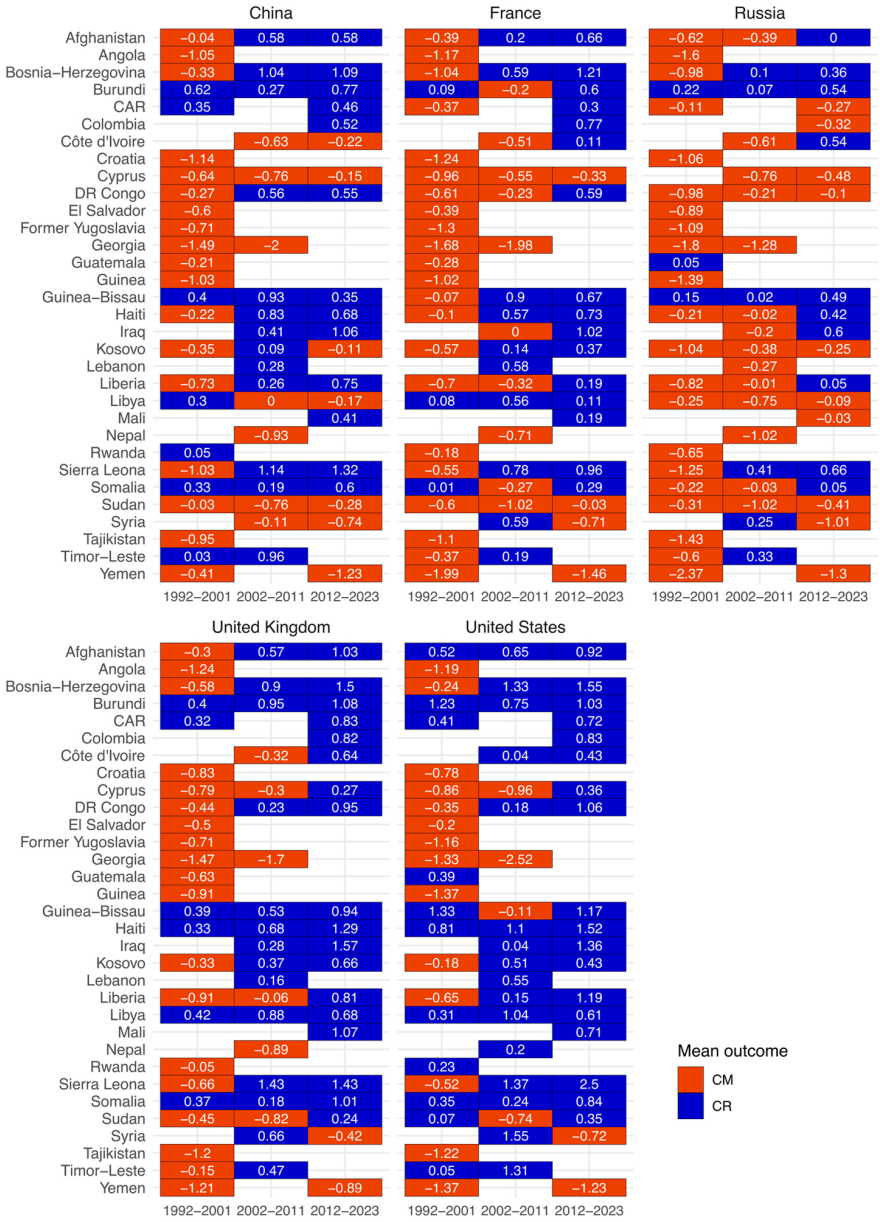

Figure 6. Heatmap of conflict framing over time by P5.

Second, there was a notable convergence between the P3 in 47 of 65 country-periods (72.31%). This convergence has even intensified over time, reaching almost full alignment for the 2011–2023 period. In this final phase, the Western states expressed the same preferences for virtually

all conflicts discussed in the UNSC except for Cyprus and Sudan. If divergences in preferences occur among the P3, France stands out in nine cases. The majority of these outliers are located in Africa and concentrated in the 2002–2011 period (Burundi, DR Congo, Iraq and Somalia). In many cases, colonial relationships likely drive this idiosyncratic French position (Burundi, Central African Republic or Haiti). The United Kingdom only diverges in a single instance (Côte d'Ivoire in 2002–2011). Finally, the United States has a divergent position from France and the United Kingdom in eight cases. Again, the majority are located in the 2022–2011 period (Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Lebanon, Nepal and Rwanda). In addition, the American trend of maintaining distinct positions in areas of heavy investments in interventions (e.g. in Afghanistan) emerges from this distribution.

Third, the analysis reveals less policy convergence between the P2, which is found in 41 of 65 individual country-periods (63.08%), a trend significantly lower compared to the P3. It shows that identifying consistent P2 patterns is challenging, contesting the notion of a coherent China-Russia alignment on CMR. However, the convergence between Russia and China has increased over time (72% in 1992–2001, 55% in 2002–2011 and 75% in 2012–2023). Following the prior literature that argues for the existence of the coordinated veto as a recent phenomenon (Gowan, 2024), the result shows that P2 alignment has become more prominent in the final years of the observation period. It can be traced back to the active Chinese participation in Council affairs. Overall, even when examining specific conflicts, no consistent evidence for a P3 versus P2 positioning emerges. This assumed distinction is only observed in one country-period (1.52%), namely in Libya 2002–2011. The 2011 Libya intervention is a widely discussed outlier due to the NATO execution, the application of the R2P and the resulting regime change, which provoked contestation by the P2 (Bellamy and Williams, 2011). For all remaining cases, the distribution of preferences over time and across conflicts does not seem to follow this logic. In that regard, our data reinforce the earlier case study evidence questioning the applicability of rigid P2 versus P3 narratives at the Council (Medzihorsky et al., 2017).

Conclusion

The article contributes both empirically and theoretically to the macro-level analysis of state preferences in the CMR domain. Overall, the article offers two main contributions. First, we introduce role theory to the field of CMR and apply it to discern the current competitive nature. It highlights the theoretical and empirical possibility of non-alignment between role conception and role enactment, by considering both the patterns of expected behaviours and the material

considerations on behalf of the interveners. Our empirical findings show that role enactment, operationalised as the P5's expressed policy preferences towards CMR across the period 1992–2023, does not always align with role conception, being – a liberal West opposed to an illiberal non-West. The United States, the United Kingdom and Russia exhibit alignment between their role conceptions and enactment, but the same conclusion is not drawn for China or France. The results challenge the assumed alignment between role conception (Western/non-Western vs liberal/illiberal) and enactment (CR vs CM). It also supports recent studies that challenge the binary distinction between West/liberal and non-West/illiberal (Levorato and Donelli, 2024; Rosas Duarte and Souza, 2024). It does so, however, not by flattening the differences between actors, but by breaking the association between the P5' roles conception and their role enactment, as captured by their policy preferences expressed at the UNSC.

Second, the article presents two hypotheses on cases of non-alignment. The first concerns the evolutionary trajectory of CMR, understood as a complex two-way process of interaction with the P5's preferences. The article identifies an evolution of the CMR field over time marked by the rise and fall of liberal interventionism as critical factors of interest for this observed non-alignment. In doing so, it moves the debate on the macro-level perspective to peace research beyond static typologies to corroborate the adaptive and pragmatic state behaviour in multilateral diplomacy concerning CMR. The longitudinal analysis shows significant changes in the policy preferences of the P5, which we discussed in relation to an overall shift from CM to CR and back. Disaggregating the analysis in three distinct periods – 1992–2001, 2002–2011 and 2012–2023 – the article evidences a gradual shift of preferences towards CR by the United States and the United Kingdom. The same is true for France, even though this transition is slower, and the country remains in all three periods more anchored in a position between CR and CM compared to its Anglophone counterparts. Both China and Russia, instead, display an evolution of preferences that expand into the CR camp in the 2000s. However, in the period 2012–2023, there is a retreat in the case of China while Russia maintains almost unchanged CM preferences. The year 2011 determined an inflection point towards CM for the non-Western states at the UNSC and more generally, a tendency towards opposing policy preferences for Western and non-Western actors.

Moreover, we stress the relevance of contextual dynamics as a second hypothesised factor. The article examines whether (non-)alignment between role conception and enactment is influenced by exogenous constraints related to individual conflict considerations. We find that there is a high contingency in the P5's preferences towards CMR. This implies that the regional and local

contexts and the specific features of the conflict are a key determinant of the P5's preferences. Our analysis of the P5's policy preferences on CMR in relation to specific conflict scenarios also reveals identifiable patterns across cases. While the data do not provide evidence for a P3 versus P2 logic in terms of expressed policy preferences across conflicts, it shows increasing convergence of positions among the P3 and between the P2 that speak to a polarised Council.

Our framework and our findings could open several new avenues for future research. A first avenue for further research emerges from breaking the alleged binary between role conception and role enactment. Further theoretical refinement and more causally oriented research designs could postulate the conditions under which (non-)alignment is more likely to occur. Second, comparative studies beyond the P5, focusing on emerging powers or elected UNSC members, could test whether similar patterns of (non-) alignment between role conception and enactment are observable among non-P5 states. Third, a key limitation of this study lies in its reliance on static role conceptions derived from the literature. Future research can seek to empirically trace potential shifts in these role conceptions over time and examine how such changes influence the P5's rhetorical alignment in CMR.

Notes

1. Unlike its application in foreign policy analysis (FPA), where the emphasis is primarily on individual policy makers, role theory in IR examines roles attributed to states as collective agents (Thies and Breuning, 2012).

2. The term 'root cause[s]' is derived from the existing literature as referring to systemic conditions that increase the likelihood of conflict (e.g. governance deficits, socioeconomic inequalities or exclusionary political institutions) and are closely connected to CR approaches (Badache et al., 2022). In this article, the term is used as it appears in the rhetoric of the P5 instead of an analytically meaningful description. We acknowledge that what counts as a root cause is context-dependent and may differ across contexts or actors.

3. There are overlaps between this vocabulary and the one mandates analysed by Badache et al. (2022). For example, SALW is included in both versions. However, our dictionary covers new mandates that were not integrated in the previous dictionary (e.g. promotion of independent media) based on UNPMM.

4. Significantly, this change is partially determined by the ascent of Xi Jinping to power, but especially by China's reaction to the Arab Springs and interventions motivated by R2P, which Beijing considered as a new form of instruction in state sovereignty aimed at promoting regime change (Fung, 2019).

5. For simplicity, we code civil wars as conflicts within a nation-state instead of using additional thresholds of classification (e.g. number of casualties).

Supplementary material

An online appendix containing supplementary information and the R code may be found with the online version of this article.

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